

Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) Issue Paper



FICMNEW advocates the development of a collaborative program to control Japanese stiltgrass in the United States, particularly in eastern areas. The targeted support groups would include volunteers as well as private landowners, county and state leaders, agency program directors, and other federal and state land managers interested in addressing invasive plants. FICMNEW supports using this widespread species as a focus to improve the concerted efforts between with federal, state, and private groups to raise awareness and take action at the local level similar to other species focused efforts in the west. Improved organization and coordination against this species can help address other invasive plant problems across the region.

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is a dense, shade tolerant mat-forming annual grass that occupies creek banks, floodplains, forest roadsides and trails, damp fields, swamps and eventually all forest areas, especially following natural disturbances. *Microstegium* can thrive in as little as five percent of normal sunlight. It is very aggressively displacing native plants expanding, for example, from 250 to 382 acres in one year at Huntley Meadow Park in Virginia. The U.S. Forest Service has well over one million acres at risk that will be too late to protect in a very short time frame. The grass currently ranges from Mississippi to Florida and north to Arkansas, Kentucky, Ohio, New York, and Connecticut. With its very low root biomass, Japanese stiltgrass infestations cause great increases in evapo-transpiration, pH and nitrification along with loss of organic soil horizon. Most vertebrates and invertebrates are lost including several birds that depend on native vegetation as part of their supporting ecosystem.

Most of the potential damage is still to come. Several control methods are already available which cause minimal to no impact on native plants. Further development of program treatment and revegetation strategies should be encouraged. A reasonable goal might be removal of half of current infestations in five years.

A stiltgrass discussion was held at the Northeastern Weed Science Society meeting in 2003, followed by a symposium in 2004. Various organizational models and funding sources were discussed. In addition, the southern gulf states are discussing organizing a regional invasive grass group, which could include stiltgrass.

FICMNEW wishes to encourage the groups in eastern areas to develop weed control organizational models which fit their locales and priorities. A possible management/eradication approach would be a watershed based organizational model (Weed Management Association), using single- or multi-state members as desired, and targeting stiltgrass or more than one species. In some cases, the more typical county level organizational models may not be as effective as a broader approach.

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Authors: Alan V. Tasker, Ph.D. USDA APHIS, National Noxious Weed Program Manager
Robert Nowierski, Ph.D. USDA CSREES,
National Program Leader Bio-Based Pest Management
Marc Imlay, Ph.D. U.S. Army National Guard Invasive Species Manager, (*Retired during
the finalization of this document)